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SOCIALISM AND SAILORS.

BY

BENJAMIN T. HALL,

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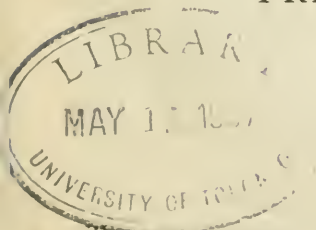
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*Secretary to the Club and Institute Union, and late Assistant
Secretary to the National Seamen's and Firemen's Union.*

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SOCIALISM AND SAILORS.

II A PAPER READ TO THE FABIAN SOCIETY AT ESSEX HALL, ON
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F25

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THE sailor is not much of a politician, and politics have little interest for him. Yet that inherent cussedness, which—making it an abounding delight to disagree with one's neighbor—is the incentive to political discussion, a sailor possesses to a degree hardly excelled by Socialists in conference.

The excited disputation of immaterial differences, the soothing and certain faith in the iniquity or imbecility of your opponents, and the *mala-fides* and self-seeking of your friends, the yet pleasanter habit of giving these faiths utterance: on land, these afford an undoubted opening for a man of vigorous expression, of suspicious temperament, and with no particular ideas. At sea it is different. There with the character of his last ship, the quality of the grub, the incapacity of his mates, the genial temper of the captain, and the infamous villainy of the cook, each calling for his picturesque and freely delivered opinions, small wonder is it that the mariner gives scant attention to matters of a more trivial character.

The Disestablishment of the English or other Church, Home Rule for Ireland or elsewhere, Reform of the Registration Laws: what are these things to him compared with the debated accuracy of the steward's scales? And apart from mere political reforms, what of interest is there to him in popular social legislation, begun or suggested? There are three great parties in the State, the Tory Party, the Liberal Party, and the Fabian Society. I do not know that the first of these has any programme; but if a sailor scan the gospel as delivered at Newcastle, he will see nothing that will mitigate the evils which surround *him*; and he will find as little in the "Workers' Political Programme" of the Fabians, the possibility of the Nationalization of Shipping being still too remote for mention. A Chancellor of the Exchequer *in posse*, unfolding his budget in the untrammelled pages of a Review, has no more cheering message for him than the tall bully *in esse*. The Socialist, unlimited by actualities, offers as little as the timid Liberal with a deficit—in soul and in exchequer. The anxieties which wait upon those who put their faith in Governments vex him not; and he cares nothing which influence is paramount in the see-saw in the Cabinet. For it does not at all matter.

This apathy, exasperating as it is in others, is reasonable enough in the seaman. He is divorced in interest from his fellows on land; and in considering the relationship of Socialism to him, it is necessary to understand how absolutely unique is his position, how out of harmony with the Socialist idea are all the habits and con-

ditions of his life, and yet how, of all men, he is dependent for happiness upon the good-will of the State.

Here on shore the subordination of personal interests, or groups of interests, to those of the whole, and, collaterally, the cultivation of a sense of individual responsibility not to be avoided or delegated to others, are growing. They do not grow, it is true, with the speed of Max Adeler's century plant; but nevertheless they grow. They grow because the influence of the new ideas upon politics can even now be measured in happiness. Socialism depends for success, not upon its sweet reasonableness alone, the ardour or the eccentricity of its prophets, but largely upon the visible results of its application. Given the realization of the "*London Programme*" and its corollaries, and arguments for Socialism would arise in the daily life of all.

For all, indeed, save the Sailor !

On the shore, too, men are unconsciously drawn into a share in the common life by the widening influence of the public press. The newspaper, with its daily record of the lives of others, widens the constituency of thought, and clips the abounding sense of self-importance. Without the newspaper, a living Socialism or Democracy would be impossible. But a seaman is outside its influence and blind to the wider life it opens up. A working sailor is not a member of the community in the actual at all. He does not live in it, or under similar conditions, and he can do nothing, by taking thought, for its welfare.

His sense of a community is limited by the size of the foc'sle, and is only extended when he goes to sea in a larger vessel.

Nominally a citizen of a Democratic State, he spends his life amongst small and ever-changing groups of his fellows, governed absolutely and despotically, with no demand upon his thoughts or abilities in leisure hours. There is neither need nor opportunity for common action on board ship, save in the temporary necessities of danger ; but not then is there call for thought or for sense of responsibility. Blind, unreasoning, unqualified obedience is his ideal, held up to him by law, and rendered easy of achievement by the alternative of Irons and the Gaol.

In a case heard some two years ago in Glasgow, Sheriff Lees declared that the Merchant Shipping Act gave to the captain power to cause every man to work for twenty-four hours per day during the whole of the voyage. A more recent illustration lies in the story of the "*Port Glasgow*." The captain of this ship being hopelessly and continuously drunk, rushing from his cabin at delirious intervals to issue imbecile orders, the crew took advantage of a semi-sober hour to present to him a respectfully-worded and peaceful requisition. It asked that he would allow the chief mate to have sole control of the ship until she reached Sydney. When that port was reached, this formed the basis of a charge of insubordination. The drunkenness of the master was testified to by every man, including the officers on board, and was even admitted by himself. No other offence but the requisition was alleged, yet every member of that crew was sent to gaol for four weeks' hard labor.

This is the apotheosis of law and order ; and it is not quite as unreasonable as it looks. But it is not the kind of ground upon which Socialism readily takes root, and it produces its inevitable reaction in riot and disorder during the moments of freedom on shore.

It is practically impossible to bring to bear upon the mariner those circumstances which tend to make us "all Socialists now." The formation of a National Trade Union of Seamen has done something in the right direction, but even now it is doubtful if so socialistic an institution will survive the anarchic instincts of its members. Deprived of opportunity for personal observation, they are naturally suspicious and distrustful, a prey to every lie and leprous suggestion, a weakness exploited to the full by the prostitutes of journalism. Each branch of the Union has a tendency to govern itself by the light of its own immediate ideas, without regard for the greater organism. The component parts of "a branch meeting" are different on each occasion ; and each meeting works its own sweet will, caring little for rules, for the previous week's decision, or for any landlubberly theory of continuity. There is a brief and paradoxical reversion to common action only when chaos comes and they hurriedly combine with touching unanimity to cast the responsibility upon the shoulders of the General Secretary. The branch secretaries alone, living on shore, form the connecting links of the chain of organization, assisted by the steady influence of one or two ex-sailors, domiciled long enough on shore to catch its spirit. To these maritime Unionists, the strike naturally enough seemed at first the only weapon. They now begin slowly to see that the chief business of a Sailors' Union is public agitation, the placing before the shore-working community the picture of a sailor's life.

This community can, if it choose, do much for him. Ought it to do this, or to let him go to the devil? Up till recently, it has let him go, and complacently watched his going. He is without friends, for he lacks the current coin which buys them. A merciful Providence having sent us politicians, there is no industrial damsel in distress but some valiant knight will be found to succor her, asking only in return the priceless guerdon of the vote. Lofty ideals, chivalrous zeal, noble and inspiring sentiments lead the reluctant feet of statesmen to Home Rule, Miners' Eight Hours, and what not. But chivalrous sentiments are pearls not to be squandered on voteless pariahs ; and the sailor is left—in confident piety—to the care of "the sweet little cherub who sits up aloft." So we have measures passed to protect the food of the shore-working voter, who can inspect his own, and choose what and where he shall buy, but no inspection for seamen who have no option or choice whatever. We insist upon 300 cubic feet of air for the landsman, even the criminal ; whilst 72 is specified for the mariner. We secure rights to compensation for the man on shore who may meet with accident by reason of a foolish order which he need not have obeyed ; and we deny it to the seaman who cannot and dare not exercise his opinion. Sacredness of contract is gospel on the shore ; whilst a sailor may have a contract broken without his consent in half a dozen ways. We talk of reduction of

hours by legislation for almost every kind of workman who need not work excessive hours against his will ; but we hear no talk of it for the sailor, who must work as many hours as he is ordered.

These inequalities do not altogether escape the eyes of Jack. If he cannot be made to feel himself a member of the community, he cannot escape, during his brief furlough on shore, some sense of it as it exists in others, and some glimpse of its operation. Then the utter imbecility of attempting to earn a living upon the sea dawns upon him ; and he leaves it for work on shore. This process is daily going on. British sailors, insensibly affected by the rising standard of life, are leaving the Mercantile Marine, their places being taken by the Continental, the African, and the Asiatic, with their lower standards. During the last four years (1888-92), the proportion of Continental seamen has increased 12 per cent., whilst the proportion of coolies, Zanzibar "boys," Lascars, and Chinamen has increased 38 per cent., exclusive of officers. Certainly one-third, if not more, of what is known as the British Mercantile Marine is Continental or Asiatic.

This is to be regretted for ethnological and other reasons. We cannot stay the exodus ; but we may stem it. If we cannot make our sailor an ideal citizen, we can at least make his life as safe and as comfortable as is humanly possible—can give him at least theoretically legal equality with other workmen.

Theoretical equality only, because, from the very nature of things, he can never be equal. Law, to be applied upon individual initiative in the Courts, is practically non-existent for him.

A docker working upon the quay gets his finger crushed by some blunder of the foreman. Failing to get compensation, he sets the law in motion, and whilst that law delays, proceeds to such work as he can do. When the case comes on for hearing, he requests or subpoenas the attendance of his witnesses. The day's attendance of these and the solicitor's bill are the only expenses involved. Even this is held by many to be practically prohibitive. But how different is the sailor's position ! He, unlike the docker, has no legal title to compensation. We will suppose, however, that he has. He moves the Courts. The ship sails, with it some of his witnesses, whilst the remainder scatter to the four ends of the earth. He must wait until the ship returns (an adjournment being always granted on the ground of the absence of material evidence), and if he has got any witnesses, which is unlikely, he must maintain them until the case is heard. What sailor can do this ? The public opinion which hangs over the actions of employers on shore extends no assistance to him. The fear of this—the letter to the newspaper, the visit of the imaginative reporter, the sympathetic editorial leader, and the remonstrances, may be, of humane friends—all these operate to prevent the need for litigation arising on the part of the shore worker. But on board ship there is nothing to modify the license of a brutal captain or a callous owner. Litigation, where permitted him, is the seaman's only hope, a hope as barren of satisfaction as the thirst of Tantalus. A recent and typical illustration of the law in operation, swelling the record of cash spent in legal expenses by the

Seamen's Union, and affording much opportunity for indignation in the breasts of compassionate shipowners, is the case of Alexander Feros. This man was left on shore at Constantinople, whither he had gone with the captain to see a doctor. He was taken in charge by the Union's representative in that port, maintained for awhile, and finally sent at the Union's expense to England, where an action was at once entered against the owners. The action was pending some four months, during which time Feros was maintained in food, lodgings, and clothes by the Union. Witnesses had to be discovered and taken from ships in which they were then sailing, and also detained at 30/- per week on shore. Counsel were engaged, and the case eventually heard in Liverpool. It resulted in Feros's favor. The wages sued for (£3 12s. 6d.) were recovered, and *one day's costs*. This case cost the Union nearly £80. It was obviously the duty of the Union to see its member righted; but not a farthing was spent more than the ultimate success demanded. Practically the whole of the expense was occasioned by the special circumstances of a sailor's employment, and would not have been incurred in a similar case on shore.*

One does not quite see how the inequality is to be adequately balanced, and it will probably remain one of the permanent attractions of a sailor's life. It can be adjusted somewhat by throwing upon the Board of Trade the onus of prosecution rather than leaving it to the sailor. Such restrictions as the Merchant Shipping Acts at present impose upon the cupidity of owners are mainly operative upon the seaman's initiative; and he is deterred by liability to deductions from his wages if he does not make out his case. This handicapping, assisted by the rigorous discipline of the ship, brought to bear upon a man to whom collective and sustained action is absolutely novel, makes the law a dead letter. Thus a sailor may claim damage from an owner for the supply of impure water. Water is frequently supplied to seamen which is nothing but sewage, productive of dysentery, diarrhœa, and kindred diseases. It is often condemned as unfit for drinking by the medical officer of a port. Here is a sample: "On Monday your inspector inspected the water supply on board the s.s. '*Salerno*.' The water was suspicious in appearance, and some of the crew had suffered from diarrhœa on the voyage. He submitted a sample to the Port Analyst for report.

Total Solid Matter	...	...	...	...	...	15'75
Chlorine	...	...	...	...	...	1'24
Equals Common Salt	...	...	...	...	...	2'04
Free Ammonia	...	...	...	...	...	'0028
Albumenoid Ammonia	...	...	...	...	...	'0105
Oxygen absorbed in four hours	...	...	...	...	...	'1094
Nitrates	...	...	...	...	...	none
Phosphoric Acid	...	...	...	...	Very many traces.	

Remarks:—This water is dirty and swarms with living organisms, many visible to the naked eye. It is not good drinking water."†

* In spite of these difficulties, the Union last year recovered £2551 by legal proceedings for its members.

† Report, Medical Officer of Health, 1891—1892, Hull and Goole Port Sanitary Authority, pp. 10—11.

I have suggested to Mr. Havelock Wilson, M.P., that he call for a return of all seamen reported sick or dead of diarrhœa or dysentery in any one year ; I am convinced some startling figures will result. It is perfectly easy to keep a continuous supply of good water ; and it is an illustration of the neglect of the seaman by the State, that this should be a grievance of the present day. But an action for compensation by a seaman has never been known.

Take an even more serious matter : In 1876 an Act came into operation giving power to the Board of Trade to detain vessels complained of as unseaworthy. Up to June, 1892, no less than 1417 were thus reported ; and of these all save 25 were condemned as unsafe. Of these 1392 unseaworthy ships, only 79 were reported by the crew ! On the remaining 1313 the men were prepared to go to sea with heavy odds on death, without murmur or complaint. It is important that this should be remembered, because we shall be told that State interference will sap the manhood and sturdy independence of the British Tar. And we shall be told, too, in the same breath, that Jack is insubordinate and complaining. Surely no Lascar could be more submissive ! The truth lies the other way. The want of State intervention has destroyed healthy individuality in the sailor ; and save when actually in the presence of death, he bows as silently and as faithfully to Kismet as the Asiatic.

The difficulty of securing his rights for him, however, is no reason for depriving him of them ; and he claims, first and above all, the right to compensation for injury arising from the neglect or incompetence of his superior, whose orders he is bound to obey.

The doctrine of common employment as between fellow-workmen has aroused strong resentment on the shore. On the sea it is applied not alone to fellow-workmen, but to all. That is, the captain is regarded as the fellow-workman of the cabin-boy, and against his blunders or incompetence no remedy exists. Why 200,000 workmen should be ear-marked and set on one side when the Dotheboys Chamber sends around its spoonful of justice, is inexplicable on any other ground than their want of voting power. They are the Smikes of politics, the despised and rejected of politicians ; and I submit that Socialism should take these helpless outcasts under its wing. In so far, however, as this particular injustice is concerned, there is immediate prospect of remedy. There is a little paper, the organ of Trade Unionism in Australia, called the *Australian Workman*, from the perusal of which you rise always with the knowledge of some fact of which you were hitherto ignorant. Thus somewhere in June, 1892, I read that "Mr. Sidney Webb, a prominent official of the English Seamen's Union, has been elected a member of the the London County Council for Deptford." Shortly after the General Election I read that "Mr. Asquith, a prominent member of the Fabian Society, has been appointed to the post of Home Secretary in the Liberal Government." Sorrow and delight were inextricably confounded in my mind. Sorrow that a Socialist should sink so low as to become a member of a Liberal Cabinet ; delight in the knowledge that it would be his duty to draft a New Employers'

Liability Bill, and the certainty that a Fabian could not consent to the exclusion of seamen. My hopes were justified.

Mr. Asquith may not be a Fabian; but no man can deny his value to the sailor; for the Employers' Liability Bill, as drafted by him, and as it will pass, includes in its definition of workman, "Every person employed upon every British ship." Let us indulge our gratitude to Mr. Asquith with one eye on the fact that his action synchronises with the first advent of a working sailor upon the floor of the "House." This instalment of justice will of course "deal an irreparable blow at an already crippled industry"; but it is in the continuance of this evil course that the bringing home of Socialism to the sailor lies. If he cannot be got to share the Socialist's views and work, we can none the less impose upon him the material conditions which the Socialist considers human. What he wants is safety for life and limb, good food and plenty, sanitary apartments, a reasonable day's work, a voice in his own affairs whenever possible, fair play for wife and child, and all the possible opportunities for moral development in his leisure. He wants grandmotherly Government; and he ought to get it. Let me indicate one or two ways in which that may be applied. Any one of them will "paralyse trade," and "drive every shipowner to place his ship under a foreign flag." But if consolation is needed in the hour of these impending trials, it can be remembered that trade has been paralysed before, and has incontinently swelled in volume thereby, and that the threat of transference, if uttered in haste, is carried out in reassuring leisure.

The first consideration in order and in importance is the preservation of the sailor's life. Sailors are very cheap. A sympathetic Durham jury, ignorant of the law—as was the Recorder—awarded a widow £175 (of which she was promptly deprived on appeal) for the loss of her husband. He was an able seaman. Ordinary seamen are cheaper than that. Fabian sympathy, however, is unbounded; and we may take it that the saving of even these cheap lives is desirable.

Synonymous with saving of life is increase of leisure. A ship is unseaworthy when she is in the hands of men who are wearied with over-labor; and collisions sometimes result from an exhausted and sleepy watch. In times of storm and danger, the crew is frequently insufficient to perform the work upon which the safety of the ship depends. The Board of Trade returns of missing ships are eloquent of this. Thus the "Lansdowne" sailed on the 12th October, 1890, never to be heard of again. She was of 1486 tons, and she carried 14 hands. According to a scale drawn by Captain Hatfield, she should have carried 25 hands (nearly double the actual crew carried). This gentleman is a shipowner, and should be an authority.*

As far as can be fixed—that is, for a normal day on board—sufficient men should be carried to guarantee an eight hours day for sailors. A six hours day should be enough for firemen. These, or such other hours as may be thought desirable, can be secured by a manning

* "I find that in less than seven years, Captain Hatfield has owned twelve ships, and in the course of that time has lost eleven of them." (Mr. J. Chamberlain, House of Commons, May 19th, 1884.)

scale which will allot to ships of certain tonnage and build a fixed number of hands of all capacities, Able Seamen, Ordinary Seamen, Firemen, and Trimmers ; and this scale should be made minimum and compulsory

A necessary corollary to this is a Rating Bill, establishing certificates of competency. The Payment of Wages and Rating Act of 1880 provides already that no man shall be entitled to the Rating of A.B. unless he has seen four years' sea service. But as there is no power to enforce this, it remains an inoperative Act, a pious opinion only. A man who has never seen a row-boat may ship as A.B. nominally, at the A.B.'s rate of wages. When out at sea, the master can disrate him for incompetence, and reduce his wages to what he pleases. There is, too, nothing to compel owners to ship A.B.s at all. An examination this year of the articles of the Atlantic passenger s.s. "Assyrian"—one of a splendid line of ships belonging to one of the most reputable and certainly the most Christian of firms—showed that out of seventeen alleged A.B.s, fourteen were unable to give proof of such service. To interfere with this would "limit the choice of owners in obtaining seamen," says the Board of Trade, a Government Department which limits its own choice of clerks by a rigorous examination. Our manning scale having fixed the number of A.B.s and firemen, we want to prevent a man shipping as A.B. without producing a certificate, or discharges showing four years' sea service ; or as a fireman without one year's service as trimmer, or similar experience on shore. The making of the Act of 1880 compulsory and penal will accomplish this.

Last, but not least, persons engaged as cooks should be compelled to produce evidence of some elementary knowledge of their important art.

The employment of Lascars—physically and morally unfit as they are to cope with times of stress and storm—should be curtailed, making them a limited proportion only of the crew. A man working on shore at hazardous employment can note the incompetence of his mate, and have him removed, or at worst remove himself. If a man handled a winch or a crane dangerously, protest would be made and he could be discharged. Anyway, one need not wittingly work with him. But if a man is incompetent on board, you have got to work with him, or have his work added to your own. The replies of Sir Henry Calcraft to the Duke of Devonshire at the Labor Commission are worth quoting :

"Q.—Under the present law, after a seaman had signed articles he would be liable to punishment if he refused to go to sea, even if he found that the other members of the crew were incompetent, would he not ?

"A.—Yes, certainly.

"Q.—He has no right to require any proof of the competence of the men with whom he goes to sea ?

"A.—Exactly !

" Q.—If the master chooses to take the risk of employing an incompetent man, whom he knows to be incompetent, there is nothing to prevent him ?

" A.—Nothing ! "

Note that it matters only that the master, who will gain kudos from his employer if all comes off well, should accept the risk ; but the willingness of the men, who take greater risk and gain nothing but extra work, is quite consistently not considered. For is it not this kind of risk that inculcates in the sailor a vigorous self-reliance, etc. ? Will it not be an evil day for the mercantile marine, if a meddling and debilitating Socialism deprive him of these excellent aids to character ?

However, having thus spoilt the seaman, robbed him of all those traits which are best—and most profitable—in British manhood, let us see what evil restrictions we, in pursuit of the same policy, can put upon the owner. We will turn first to those laws which make it penal to load a ship beyond a certain point. In this direction, one man has done more for his day and generation than any living politician. Few people have any idea of the loss of life which attends a sailor's calling, and the enormous reduction of it which legislation has made. One has heard it said and believed that, on an average, life is as safe at sea as on land. Let me quote from Mr. Chamberlain (then President of the Board of Trade)—himself quoting from a return covering the period 1870-1882 :

" What is the fact with regard to the whole of these 12 years ? It is this—that in that time 36,000 men suffered violent deaths ; and of the whole number one in six lost his life. [An hon. MEMBER : One in 66.] No ; one in six of the average number employed in the whole twelve years, of every man, every boy, every officer, and every seaman, lost his life in the British Merchant Service. Go on, and carry that a step further. If you assume that the average working life of the seaman is 24 years, then you will find that one in every three will, in the course of his working life, perish by a violent and dreadful death." *

What has legislation in the shape of Load Line Acts and Life Saving Appliance Acts already done ? Certain returns which were laid before the Labor Commission by Sir H. Calcraft, are summarised by him in the following words :

" It will be seen that the rate of loss amongst seamen by all kinds of accident at sea in 1881 was one in 59·96 ; in 1883, the next year for which the figures were prepared on the same lines as those for 1881, which were analysed for the Royal Commission on loss of life at sea (in 1882 the figures were not prepared on the same lines), it was 1 in 66 ; in 1884 1 in 97 ; in 1885 1 in 106 ; in 1886 1 in 112 ; in 1887 1 in 99 ; in 1888 1 in 114 ; in 1889 1 in 126. The figures for the last two years have not yet been made up ; but there is no reason to suspect that they are not equally favorable. The losses by wrecks and casualties alone were 1 in 79 in 1881 ; 1 in 94 in 1883 ;

* Speech in House of Commons, May 19th, 1884.

1 in 159 in 1884; 1 in 165 in 1885; 1 in 183 in 1886; 1 in 158 in 1887; 1 in 208 in 1888; 1 in 269 in 1889; 1 in 184 in 1890; and 1 in 256 in 1891, so far as reported."*

A stupendous reduction which should make the name of Samuel Plimsoll live when the glorified hucksters of politics are forgotten! The fixing of a load-line was a noble work, but incomplete; and Socialists should turn with eager hands to its completion. Infringements of the Act dealing with overloading are punishable by fine—the maximum penalty being £100. In the majority of ports the law is administered by unpaid J.P.s, mostly interested in shipping. The fines are small and inadequate; their average amount is but £16, although sometimes the maximum is reached. The Stipendiary Magistrate of Cardiff invariably inflicts the maximum penalty. Yet it has been shown in evidence before him that, after this has been paid, £200 of profit has yet been made.

There is a precedent which can be followed in this matter. When a sailor smuggles tobacco—as he sometimes does—and is caught, he is fined just double the value of the duty. Apply this to the owner, make the fine £100 as a minimum, rising to double the value of the illegitimate over-freight, and it will stop over-loading.

A word as to over-insurance. When a ship is insured above her value, the owner practically lays a money wager against her return. Owners are honorable men—"all honorable men"—and doubtless pray for the loss of their wager, and the safety of the ship. To remove them, however, from temptation (desire for lucre sometimes overcoming natural piety), policies should be held to be void for any amount in excess of two-thirds of the value of the ship. The race of owners who would coin sailors' blood for drachmas is not yet extinct. A great shipowner and builder, Mr. Samuda, once said that there would be no great diminution in the loss of life at sea unless there was some risk to the owner; and to that confession nothing needs adding.

The Cunard owners boast, and that truthfully, that they have never lost a single life from preventible causes. What is possible for the Cunard is possible for all; and to transform this great possibility into actuality, with its preservation of precious lives, its destruction of sorrow, a work the value of which is not hypothetical, but can be counted year by year in living men, is surely well worth the attention and energies of Socialists.

Let us turn now to a matter of scarcely less importance—the food. This has been taken in hand by the Seamen's Union with some success. In the last Parliament they succeeded in getting a Bill carried, compelling the inspection of ships' provisions. It will no longer be possible to put rotten meat, or animals which have died, on board ship. In the present Parliament Mr. Havelock Wilson has obtained the second reading of a Bill fixing a minimum scale of food for each day. At present a scale is written upon the face of a ship's articles, and when you "sign on," you sign acceptance of this scale. You sign,

* MINUTES, Royal Labor Commission (C. 6795). Group B., p. 269.

but the scale is not guaranteed. Below the scale is written or stamped "substitutes at the master's option." It will be obvious how this works out. You get what are sarcastically called "equivalents." This is the method of reasoning. "Half a pound of butter is equal in nutriment to two pounds of beef; half a pound of marmalade is equal to half a pound of butter; therefore half a pound of marmalade is equal to two pounds of beef."

However perfect this syllogism may appear to those who believe a man may thrive upon much logic and a little lentils, it does not commend itself to the untutored sailor, who knows little of logic, and who clings, spite of all else, firmly in his devotion to the flesh. The food scale of the Seamen's Union, providing about one pound of flesh meat per day, if less logical, is more satisfactory. Objection may be taken from a shore point of view to its inflexibility. But these things cannot be looked at in landscape; and the sailor will continue to prefer inflexibility to uncertainty in the supply of beef. The Bill, owing to the state of business in the Commons, has been withdrawn for the year; but will doubtless become law before the next election.

The next effort will be devoted to increasing the air space. As has before been said, the amount now specified is 72 cubic feet. It is proposed to increase this to 120—about one-third of that allowed a murderer on shore. There is no reason why baths should not also be supplied, at any rate for the firemen, and a free library for the use of the whole of the crew. The compulsory leisure which now turns itself at best to fearful and wondrous exercises in carving, knitting, and oil painting, might be employed to train native genius on scientific lines.

The sanitation of ships is in the hands of the Local Port Sanitary Authority, controlled, in every port but London, by the local representative body. Here lies an opportunity for Socialist activity. Let those who dwell in ports, slum, not alone in narrow streets, but in narrower fo'c'sles. On board the ships entering our ports, as many men dwell as in our courts and alleys, with a hundred times less protection, a thousand less facilities for personal care. In Liverpool recently, such activity has resulted in the appointment of two additional sanitary inspectors for ships—a revolutionary proceeding which has alarmed the owners and delighted the seamen of the port.

Paint-lockers, closets, and such like should be removed from contiguity with the men's sleeping apartments. A score of other sanitary reforms will be readily discovered by the Socialist in search of them. Most people have seen how iron "sweats." I can well remember in early days watching the drops fall from the outside of a cistern, and wondering why a more impervious material than iron was not used. So in a ship's fo'c'sle. Many a man sleeps with globules of water during the whole of the night falling "like the gentle rain from heaven" upon the berth beneath, dropping from the iron sides of the ship, and from the iron deck and girders overhead. The provision of a little match-boarding will prevent this, although it may ruin the shipowner. A space should be provided where clothes could be dried. Now, a man frequently has his 72.

cubic feet mainly occupied by wet clothes, drying whilst he sleeps and inhales the evaporating moisture. Not one of these instances would be tolerated on shore by the most reactionary vestry; but poor Jack! he has no vote—not even for a vestry. There is one Local Board, however, for which he would like a vote, however rare his opportunity of using it; and that is the Local Board which practically controls the whole of the conditions of his employment. He has his Parish Council already, and he wants a vote on it. One can dimly imagine the storm of derision and contumely which would befall a proposal to constitute a Parish Council upon which only landlords should have the right to sit, and for whose members only landlords could vote. Yet such a Council exists for the sailor. Local Marine Boards, fulfilling the same functions and more, than a Parish Council, are elected by shipowners from shipowners. A register of shipowners is prepared; shipowners only can be candidates; shipowners only can vote. A shipowner has one vote for every 250 tons owned by him, and may have ten votes. We want a register of sailors and firemen also prepared, sailors to have votes, and sailors to be candidates. Democracy being admittedly a good thing in public bodies, the seamen ask a nominal share.*

One other word only, and that for the sailor's dependents. The practice of monthly wage-payments to landsmen has long died out; in few places indeed are men paid even fortnightly. But the sailor's wife can get but once a month—not the sailor's wages, but half only. Two pounds is a sum which needs the most careful handling and management if it is to keep a woman and many little ones until the next month's wage is due; and often the sum is less than £2. The inevitable happens. Pressing necessities absorb the bulk in the first two weeks, and life is sustained in the latter by the continual trot to the pawnshop, a mortgage upon the next month's cash. This withholding of money which has been actually earned is the cause of more sorrow, more sin and shame, than most men dream of. With the seaman's consent, two-thirds of his money—or even more—should be paid to his wife every week. Shipowners object that it would be so much trouble. But every other capitalist has it to suffer; why exempt the shipowner? What is this small worry to a thousand owners, compared with the saving of one woman from shame, the rescue from break-up of one sailor's home?

This, that I have sketched, is the relationship of Socialism to the Seaman. In the upward development of the community he has no part, doomed to remain eternally beyond the pale. He can never be a citizen: to become that he must cease to be a sailor. But though he stands for ever without the walls, yet surely he gives to the community, in labor and in life, more than any of its members. On him our island progress depends. That the community may thrive, there is imposed upon him a loveless life, eternal monotony,

* The Board of Trade nominates four representatives; and Mr. Mundella has placed a practical seaman upon every Marine Board in the country. Mr. Havelock Wilson, M.P., is on the London body.

and the daily-recurring hazard of a violent death. Exiled from home, from friends, from all that we have learnt to associate with happiness, surely from the community to him there is an abounding debt, and Socialism will belie the equality it desires if it leaves that debt unpaid. To make his life less weary, less fraught with danger and with death, to keep from his wife and little ones special exposure to poverty and sin—this is all he asks—all that can be given for many years. To give him these is but a little thing to do, involving no great effort, no thwarting of other and more ambitious schemes. One instalment at least could be carried in a session if there were but any body of voters anxious for its success. To realize and fulfil this duty is a work worthy of the Fabian Society, imperative upon professors of the Socialist faith. The sailor, in these days of labor awakening, sees dimly the vision of a higher life, feels stirring within him strange and unusual hopes. In the realization of these his efforts will be often blind, often thwarted. On our help he depends; we should discredit our creed if we made no attempt to shape to practical ends the expectation of those

Who, rowing hard against the stream,
Saw distant Gates of Eden gleam,
And did not dream it was a dream.

APPENDIX.

THE LAW AS TO EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY in relation to the Shipping Interests; compiled from Reports of English officials in the various countries.

UNITED STATES.—No legislation on the subject. Legal decisions tend rather towards exonerating the employer, and adopting the "common employment" theory.

SWEDEN.—No compensation, except four weeks' extra wages for discharge with injury.

NORWAY.—No compensation.

FRANCE.—Shipowners are in the same position as other employers, and are liable for negligence, etc., of the captain. A National Insurance Bill, passed by the Chamber of Deputies, June 11th, 1893, does not include sailors in the Schedule of Employments, but a special provision is made for them.

GERMANY.—Owners are liable under any circumstances; if accident arise by reason of the acts of a person not in the owner's employment, yet if such accident happen on board whilst the sailor is in discharge of his duties, the owner must compensate. There is a legally compulsory Insurance Fund, sustained and managed by the shipowners; there are also fixed scales for injuries; the maximum for total incapacitation is an annual allowance of two-thirds of a man's ordinary wages.

NUMBER OF PERSONS employed in Vessels (Registered under the Merchant Shipping Acts) belonging to the United Kingdom and the Isle of Man (but exclusive of the Channel Islands), which were returned as employed in the Home and Foreign Trades in 1886, 1888, 1890. (Appendix xcix., Lab. Com., Group B.)

Note.—Persons employed in vessels engaged in inland navigation and in yachts are not included.

Year.	British Seamen.	Foreign Seamen.	Lascars.	Masters.	Fishermen (including Skippers.)	Total.
1886	144,332	24,767	16,673	13,917	21,203	220,892
1888	144,201	24,937	18,427	13,590	21,253	222,408
1890	151,132	26,998	22,734	13,563	20,483	234,910

NUMBER OF SHIPS and Tonnage and Analysis of Persons employed during 1892. (Nav. and Ship. Returns, 1892. C. 7005.)

Vessels.	Tonnage.	Masters.	Engin'rs.	Chief Mates.	Seamen.			Total.
					British.	Foreign.	Lascars.	
17,020	8,449,512	17,020	18,681	17,020	132,716	30,899	25,399	241,735

Note.—In many returns Lascars and other Asiatics are classed as *British* seamen. This should be watched in looking up returns.

NUMBER OF SEAMEN whose lives were lost at their employment, for the year ending June 30, 1892. (Abstract of Shipping Casualties, 1893. C. 7069.)

In Sailing Vessels, 1,284. ... In Steam Vessels, 616. ... Total, 1,900.

SHIPS DETAINED as unseaworthy by operation of Merchant Shipping Act, 1876, till June, 1892. (Par. Paper, C. 6837.)

Cause.	Reported by Crew.	Reported by Other Persons.	Total Reported.	Found Safe.	Found Unsafe.
Defects in hull, equipments or machinery	77	692	769	18	751
Overloading and improper loading ...	2	646	648	7	641
	79	1,338	1,417	25	1,392

BOARD OF TRADE PROSECUTIONS for Improper Loading, &c., under Merchant Shipping Act, 1876, for years 1885 and 1891 respectively. (Appendix, civ. and cviii. Royal Lab. Com., Group B.)

Year.	Improper Deck Loading.	Overloading.	Totals.	English Ships.	Foreign Ships.
1885	1	9	10	10	—
1891	27	49	76	57	19

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
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